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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SC Hospitals and Medicaid partner to reduce preterm births

COLUMBIA, S.C. — Forty-two of 43 hospitals that deliver babies in South Carolina have signed a pledge to end the practice of harmful elective deliveries prior to 39 weeks for pregnant Medicaid enrollees, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) announced Thursday.

The commitments are part of the department's Birth Outcomes Initiative, which seeks to reduce the number of low birth weight babies in the state. The state ranks 47th nationally in percentage of preterm births and received an "F" on last year's March of Dimes Premature Birth Report Card.

Early elective deliveries, including cesarean sections prior to 39 weeks, account for about 13 percent of all South Carolina births and can lead to low birth weight and a host of corresponding medical complications throughout life. Eliminating the practice will save taxpayers more than \$1 million a year in delivery costs and an additional \$7 million will be saved through a reduction in hospitalizations for babies.

SCDHHS worked closely with the South Carolina Hospital Association (SCHA) to secure letters from the hospitals agreeing to end the practice of early deliveries, which are typically performed out of convenience. The initiative also is endorsed by the South Carolina Obstetrical and Gynecological Society and the South Carolina March of Dimes.

"This is a win for families and taxpayers and we're extremely pleased that hospitals and physicians have committed to implementing best practices that improve the health and well-being of babies born in South Carolina," said SCDHHS Director Tony Keck.

Dr. Rick Foster, senior vice president of quality and patient safety at SCHA, said he was impressed with the broad-based support the Birth Outcomes Initiative has received among doctors and hospitals throughout South Carolina. "This is truly a partnership, and we commend all the hospitals that made this commitment to improve perinatal care in our state," Foster said.

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“The March of Dimes is excited to be working in partnership with the Department of Health and Human Services and the South Carolina Hospital Association to lead the effort to improve birth outcomes in the state of South Carolina,” said Kathryn Douglas, area director for the March of Dimes. “We applaud all of our hospitals and their designated champions for their commitment to this quality initiative. This marks an important day in the lives of moms and babies!”

Each hospital signing the pledge designated two project “champions” to help ensure the institution fully implements the initiative. *See attached list of participating hospitals.* In addition to ending early elective deliveries, the Birth Outcomes Initiative is working with the SCHA, other state agencies, patients, providers and insurers to achieve the following goals:

- Making it easier for patients to access an affordable progesterone treatment that can help reduce preterm births for some women;
- Implementing a screening tool for substance abuse, depression and domestic violence among pregnant women which can effect birth outcomes;
- Identifying and targeting health disparities among minority populations. While African American women in the state’s Medicaid program account for 46 percent of all live births, they account for 58 percent of low birth weight babies, and about 64 percent of very low birth weight babies.

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The following hospitals have signed letters of commitment to end all early elective deliveries for pregnant Medicaid enrollees:

<u>Hospital</u>	<u>Location</u>
Aiken Regional Medical Centers	Aiken
AnMed Health	Anderson
Baptist Easley Hospital	Easley
Beaufort Memorial Hospital	Beaufort
Bon Secours St Francis Health System, Inc	Greenville
Bon Secours St Francis Hospital	Greenville
Carolina Pines Regional Medical Center	Hartsville
Carolinas Hospital System - Florence	Florence
Chesterfield General Hospital	Cheraw
Clarendon Memorial Hospital	Manning
Colleton Medical Center	Walterboro
Conway Medical Center	Conway
East Cooper Medical Center	Mt. Pleasant
Georgetown Memorial Hospital	Georgetown
Grand Strand Regional Medical Center	Myrtle Beach
Greenville Memorial Medical Center	Greenville
Greer Memorial Hospital	Greer
Hilton Head Regional Healthcare	Hilton Head
Kershaw Health	Camden
Laurens County Health Care System	Clinton
Lexington Medical Center	West Columbia
Loris Healthcare System	Loris
Marion Regional Hospital	Mullins
Marlboro Park Hospital	Bennettsville
Mary Black Health System LLC	Spartanburg
McLeod Medical Center Dillon	Dillon
McLeod Regional Medical Center	Florence
MUSC Medical Center	Charleston
Oconee Medical Center	Seneca
Palmetto Health Baptist	Columbia
Palmetto Health Richland	Columbia
Piedmont Medical Center	Rock Hill
Regional Medical Center	Orangeburg
Roper Hospital	Charleston
Roper - Mount Pleasant Hospital	Mount Pleasant
Self Regional Healthcare	Greenwood
Spartanburg Regional	Spartanburg
Springs Memorial Hospital	Lancaster
Trident Health System	Charleston/ Summerville
Tuomey Healthcare System	Sumter
Waccamaw Community Hospital	Georgetown
Wallace Thomson Hospital	Union